1-1-1979

Rational emotive therapy: possible applications for secondary students with learning disabilities

William C. Tier

X-17

RATIONAL EMOTIVE THERAPY: POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

by

William C. Tier

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION
(EDUCATION OF LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN)
AT THE CARDINAL STRITCH COLLEGE

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

1979

This research paper has been
approved for the Graduate Committee
of the Cardinal Stritch College by

Susan Sperry Ph.D.
(Advisor)

Date May 1, 1979

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

That behavior problems tend to accompany the child with learning disabilities is a proposition which is not in dispute. The frustration of the child who cannot meet the demands placed on him by his environment, coupled with his own awareness that he is not making the grade, leads to an array of problems which are often talked about in terms such as poor self concept, low self esteem, faulty social perception and lack of peer acceptance (Bryan, 1978). As Janet Lerner (1971) stated:

> For the learning disabled child, then, the feelings within himself and the feedback from the outside environment mold a concept of an insecure and threatening world and a concept of himself as an inept person without identity. Such a child does not receive the normal satisfaction of recognition, achievement, or affection. (p. 165)

It is not surprising, then, that the learning disabled student, battered by a school environment in which the criteria for success depend on the very skills which he lacks, often manifests behavior problems. Adelman (1978) stated that

> the natural thrust of the first works dealing specifically with learning disabilities was to focus on . . . developmental problems--their etiology, diagnosis, and treatment. However, as professionals set out to apply what the early textbooks advocated, it became clear that

> identifying a child's problem as a developmental disability did not eliminate the fact that many children with learning disabilities also manifested behavior problems. (p. 44)

These professionals soon learned that the problem behaviors had to somehow be dealt with before the theories and techniques of their field could be successfully applied. Something more than theories dealing with the developmental disabilities was needed, and an additional requirement for the field of learning disabilities was introduced--knowledge of behavior management. This knowledge came mainly from learning theory.

Adelman (1978) summarized this view:

> This emphasis on behavior control generally has been dominated by the school of psychological thinking known as behaviorism, and, until recently, particularly by the extreme views usually attributed to its best known contemporary advocate, B. F. Skinner . . . . Thus the focus in the LD field has been on behavior modification, and "motivation" has been seen as a matter of controlling contemporary reinforcement contingencies. (p. 44)

To be sure, the behaviorist school of thinking has given much perspective to our understanding of behavior and has led to many innovative and effective techniques for managing a wide range of behavior problems. A great deal of progress has been made in helping children learn by using techniques developed from behaviorism. Task analysis, targetting behaviors and goals, charting, token economies, contingency contracting, and time out are only a few of a plethora of strategies which have helped make special education classes (and regular classes) better environments in which to learn.

Yet behavior modification has hardly proved a panacea in dealing with learning and behavior problems in students. In fact, many educators have questioned the practice of using a systematic behavior control program. Many criticisms have been leveled. One of the most salient focuses on the issue of generalization of learning. Kazdin and Bootzen (1972) reviewed token economy systems and found that reinforcers were effective in controlling behaviors within the classroom setting, but that changes in behavior did not carry over into other environments. This is a crucial issue for learning disabilities, in that intervention has as its goal the improvement of performance outside the learning disabilities classroom. The very purpose of the resource room is to make improvements in the student's performance so that he will be able to meet his potential in the regular classroom. One has only to think of the number of occasions in which the learning disabilities teacher is called upon to respond to problem behaviors which occur outside the LD classroom--either in the regular class, at home, or on the schoolyard--to understand that the generalization of behaviors, academic and otherwise, learned by the student is the crux of successful intervention.

A related limitation of behavior modification is the question of control of contingencies. Control of behavior is most effective when one controls all of the

contingencies. However, this is very difficult to do even within the learning disabilities classroom. A teacher cannot always control reinforcements from a student's peers for an undesired behavior. The thought of controlling all contingencies outside of the learning disabilities classroom is ludicrous. In this regard we are brought back to the problem of generalization--what good is there in modifying behaviors under controlled circumstances if these behaviors do not carry over to another environment because the contingencies are different?

A third difficulty with using a reward system which is extrinsic to the student is that the extrinsic reward may very well interfere with the student's intrinsic motivation to perform and master a new task (Wlodkowski, 1977). Two studies found that this is a very real danger. In one study, (Lepper, Greene & Nisbett, 1973) children were given Magic Markers with which to play. Half were told they would receive a reward for doing so, while the other half were not offered any reward. The group which expected the reward spent less free time after the experiment playing with the markers, and their drawings during the experiment were rated as poorer than the comparison group (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973).

In a second study by Calder and Staw (1975), college students were given puzzles to do. Half the students were

given puzzles intended to sustain interest, the other half puzzles which had little of interest to them. Each of the two groups was again divided, some of the subjects were offered rewards and some not. Results indicated that interest declined when extrinsic rewards were offered to subjects performing the interesting task, while the extrinsic reward increased interest in the dull task. It appeared that extrinsic rewards could be of some benefit to increase interest in tasks that have little to stimulate intrinsic interest, but that extrinsic rewards should be used only with great care lest they rob a task of its potential to motivate the individual intrinsically. On this issue, Jerome Bruner (1966) made the point that extrinsic rewards, when they are used at all, should only be used to motivate a student to begin a certain type of task, but that any task should take on intrinsic motivational properties if it is properly presented. Thus, he felt it unethical to use extrinsic rewards over a long period to keep a student performing on any task.

Staw's review of the literature (1975) on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation came to a conclusion which sums up this issue rather well:

> There is no doubt that grades, gold stars, and other such incentives can alter the direction and vigor of specific "in school" behaviors (e.g., getting students to complete assigned exercises by a particular date).

> But because of their effect on intrinsic motivation, extrinsic rewards may also weaken a student's general interest in learning tasks and decrease voluntary learning behavior that extends beyond the school setting. In essence, then, the extrinsic forces that work so well at motivating and controlling specific task behaviors may actually cause the extinction of these same behaviors within situations devoid of external reinforcers. This is an important consideration for educational organizations since most of an individual's learning activity will no doubt occur outside of the highly regulated and reinforced setting of the classroom. (p. 176)

Thus far, we have seen that the field of learning disabilities has had to recognize that a solution to the behavior problems of LD students had to be found before the teachers could hope to apply the theories and techniques which have been developed to ameliorate or compensate for the student's learning problems. The solutions were found in behaviorism and behavior control systems. Some very significant practical problems still remain. Often the behaviors which are learned in a controlled setting through the use of extrinsic reinforcers do not manifest themselves in other environments, often due to the fact that the contingencies of other environments and situations are different from the environment in which the learning occurred. It is this very practical problem which might first lead one to question some of the current practices in behavior control. Yet practical problems, when pushed, often lead to theoretical and heuristic problems, and we see this happening in the third limitation of behavior modification noted. For in this third criticism, the

discussion changes planes. In asking how we can better get behaviors to generalize, or how we can better control contingencies, we are still in the behaviorist world-view. We are still assuming that the individual is a passive organism which is shaped by the contingencies of his environment. Our problem remains one of arranging his environments in order to shape him to our satisfaction.

When we begin to speak of <u>intrinsic</u> motivations, however, and to look at relationships between <u>extrinsic</u> reinforcers (rewards) and <u>intrinsic</u> motivation, we are singing a different tune. For if we speak of the individual as motivated from within, as finding satisfaction in performing activities which are not necessary for the physical survival of the individual, then we are saying that he is not merely a passive organism. He is, indeed, an individual and contributes to the kind and quality of his interaction with his environment. The individual, rather than being molded by his environment much as a stone is molded by the sculptor, plays an active role in interacting with his environment to become who he is. Might we look to this different view of man, a view of him as an active participant in his own learning, to find some clues to the solution of a practical problem like generalizing learning?

Adelman (1978) found that we can:

> Behaviorism generally has dominated the environmental study of motivation in psychology, and consequently, motivation and particularly intrinsic motivation as a topic has only slowly come to the forefront of scientific and practical inquiry in psychology. It is now time for the LD field to take account of organismic approaches to motivation in general, and particularly those views which suggest that thought and feelings can be determiners of behavior. (author's emphasis, p. 44)

This is not the place for an involved discussion of organismic approaches to behavior, but the reader can find such a discussion in a number of works, among them being Atkinson, 1964; de Charms, 1968; Deci, 1976; and Staw, 1975. Adelman (1978) did go on to give a brief description of organismic approaches:

> In essence, organismic approaches assume that humans act on their environments rather than being passively controlled by previous reinforcers and current environmental contingencies. Thoughts and feelings are seen as playing a primary role as determiners of behavior . . . . In contrast to behavioristic approaches, this means that rather than ignoring subjective experiences (e.g., affective states, subjective interpretations of stimuli), such experiences must be studied. (p. 44)

This is not to say that environments can be ignored. Indeed, the assumption is that individuals interact with their environments, not that they act in a vacuum. The point is that by studying the thoughts and feelings of the individual, we can get a better picture not just of the environment, but of his perception of the environment, and thus better determine what factors in the environment are significant in order to better help the individual

effectively to deal with that environment. This can mean, in some cases, rearranging or altering the individual's surroundings (for example, assigning a student to an LD resource room). But it can also mean developing or changing the individual's perceptions, his thoughts and feelings about a stimuli, so that he can better manage his life in the environment. It would seem that this is the very purpose of the LD classroom--to develop and/or change the LD student's way of interpreting his surroundings to enable him to function better in them. So, rather than concerning ourselves only with the student's environment as the behaviorist viewpoint would do, we change the environment by assigning the LD student to the LD classroom in order to help the student change, to help the student develop the perceptions, thoughts, and skills necessary to successfully interact with the environment from which he was removed.

It is hypothesized here that attending to a student's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings, rather than merely manipulating the student's environment, would go a long way toward solving the practical problem of generalization or carry over of learning which has led us into this theoretical thicket. This would be so because attention to the internal, subjective experiences which lead to behaviors would give one a better notion of why certain behaviors are or are not occurring. Intervention aimed

at developing or changing the internal, interpretive functioning of the individual could lead to new behaviors across many environments, because it is the interpretation of the environment, not a change in the environment, which has effected the behavior change or development.

In short, the use of extrinsic rewards to change behavior may not insure carry over because neither the student nor the teacher can control the contingencies in another environment. On the other hand, the student can control his interpretation of many different environments, and generalization of his behavior across environments seems to be more probable. This argument gives the advantages of an organismic approach in dealing with the problems of generalization. If, as the organismic approach assumes, all humans are "born with the basic and undifferentiated need for feeling competent and self determining" (Deci, 1975), then an approach which leaves the individual more control over his environment by improving his interpretive abilities is ethical as well. This is the position of Bruner, which was mentioned earlier.

The shift in focus to the area of subjective interpretation and intrinsic motivation is as problematic as it is promising. Measuring internal variables has always been extremely difficult. Agreement upon which variables should be measured is no easier. In addition, precision

of the language and concepts in this area is very difficult to achieve, as a perusal of the preceding pages will convince any reader. If that does not convince the reader, consider that Julian Rotter (1975) recently found it necessary to publish a lengthy article listing many of the misuses to which his locus of control concept has been put.

Despite the difficulties, much work has already been done in the areas of attribution theory and locus of control conceptualization which attempt to provide theoretical frameworks and effective techniques for coming to grips with the individual's experiential data. The reader is referred to Adelman, 1978; Bryan, 1978; Deci, 1975; de Charms, 1968; Dweck, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978; Meichenbaum, 1976; Phares, 1976; Rotter, 1954, 1975; Staw, 1975; and Weiner, 1972.

The preceeding has been an attempt to familiarize the reader with some of the problems which have been encountered in applying behavior control techniques in the field of learning disabilities and with a current movement to shift the focus of attention to the interpretations, thoughts, and feelings of the subject in studying his behavior. The writer is in sympathy with those who feel that this shift is necessary. There is evidence to support the view that an individual's sense of control over his environment is essential. The famous Coleman study (Coleman,

et al, 1966) found that of all variables which correlated with academic success, by far the strongest correlation was with the subject's belief that he was in control of his destiny. Lessing (1969) found that a sense of personal control correlated with academic success, regardless of IQ. Harrison (1968) found that students' views of their environments correlated with school performance. Bryan (1978) concludes that ". . . these studies demonstrate that irrespective of socioeconomic status or intelligence, children's beliefs of control over their behavior affect their achievement." He goes on to say:

> The development of remedial strategies within the locus of control and attribution perspective is focused on what people are thinking. Reinforcements provide information concerning interpretations of outcomes and is intended to change opinions, explanations, and expectations for outcomes, as well as behavior. (Bryan, 1978, p. 8)

What follows, then, is an exposition of the work of Albert Ellis and Maxie Maultsby. Theirs is a system of therapy which is based precisely on the assumption that it is thought that controls both feelings and behavior, and thus that control over his thoughts will give the individual a sense of control over his own behavior in his interactions with the environment. It is a system which does not flow directly out of the theory described in the preceding pages, nor was it developed for use in the schools. Yet despite the fact that its origins are removed from education, it appears to be thoroughly in keeping with the efforts of those who advocate developing the student's

sense of control over his environment, as well as promising to lend itself well to the school setting. Ellis and Maultsby's therapy, at least on the face of it, does not hold as much promise of developing academic skills as it does of helping the student to better negotiate his larger environment, including his parents, peers, and authority figures in and out of the school. It should be noted, however, that this writer has had some success with at least one student in using Maultsby's techniques to help her to overcome what many call a "block" toward doing math successfully.

The possible applications of Ellis and Maultsby's thoughts to a school setting, and especially to learning disabilities, will be explored briefly in the conclusion. But first, let us look at the thoughts and techniques of these two men.

CHAPTER II

RATIONAL EMOTIVE THERAPY

The Authors

Albert Ellis (1963) was born in Pittsburgh and raised in New York City. He has a bachelor's degree from New York City College, and a MA and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Columbia University. He has taught at Rutgers University and New York University; has been Chief Psychologist of New York State Diagnostic Center, and then Chief Psychologist of New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies. He has been in private practice of psychotherapy for the last years, and counseling marriages and families in New York City.

Ellis is the Executive Director of the Rational Living Institute, and he is the Director of the Institute for Advanced Study in Rational Psychotherapy in the area of Clinical Services in New York City. He is an associative editor of several scientific journals, has published more than 350 articles, and has authored thirty books and monographs.

Maxie C. Maultsby worked as a family physician for nearly a decade before specializing in psychiatry. In

practicing psychiatry, he was drawn to the theories of Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Therapy and has since become a pioneer in developing techniques and methods based on RET, including laying down criteria for rational behavior. In 1970, he helped to found the Association for Rational Thinkers. He is currently Director of the Psychiatric Outpatient Department at the University of Kentucky Medical Center. He is currently doing research on self-help techniques in the treatment of alcoholics and Blacks. Dr. Maultsby has been the author of numerous articles and books on his special brand of Rational Emotive Therapy (RET), which he calls Rational Behavior Therapy (RBT).

Rational Emotive Therapy: Albert Ellis

The Rational Emotive Theroy (RET) developed out of the sheer incompleteness of the psycho-analytical theory, according to Ellis (1962, 1973). He underwent intensive training in the psycho-analytical theory and was a somewhat competent psychoanalyst, but many times he ran into a nagging underlying feeling that something was not quite right. First, the free association techniques did not work with many of his patients. Sometimes, there would be "long, unhelpful silences," and the patients would complain that he was not doing anything to help them. Many times,

even if the patient was given insight into his problems, there seemed to be no answers as to how to solve them. Ultimately, he began eclecticizing, shifting from classical Freudian to a neo-Freudian (active-directive approach), to a rapprochement between Freudian (or at least neo-Freudian) psychoanalysis and behavioristic (Pavlovian) learning theory.

At this point, he realized that insight alone is not sufficient, and concluded that for an individual to overcome his fears and hostilities, he must "do" something himself. He began encouraging his patients to do the things they feared. He encountered difficulty here because patients refused to do anything to help themselves.

Ellis further theorized that man cannot be compared to Pavlov's dogs or any other lower animals. Human beings not only are affected by physical punishment, but also by the words and gestures of others that signify that such punishment is likely to follow. Indeed, man takes heed even when there are no threats, by heeding "his own negative words and gestures about the possible negative words and gestures of others" (Ellis, 1973a). Man can become fearful from the mere thought of the words of others; man can have neuroses and it is quite different from lower animals.

In other words, Ellis felt that people were initially taught these fears and anxieties by "their parents, other people, and the mass media" but because of their ability to self-talk (super-ego), because they are able to use language, they punish or reindoctrinate themselves over and over again with the words they use. Ellis goes on to say that what is left out of Freudian and behaviorist conditioning therapy is a great deal of the self-talk or language aspects of human behavior. Ellis adds that language is not entirely left out, but it is not stressed as much as it should be.

Ellis found his patients holding on to many "early acquired irrationalities," usually unintentionally. He began to use that very language facility with which his patients were clinging to irrationalities to convince them that their thoughts were irrational by confronting and logically refuting the explanations for behavior.

Ellis admited that many of the principles incorporated in his theory are not at all new, but were originated by such philosophers as Epicletus and Marcus Aurelius and by some ancient Taoist and Buddhist thinkers. He said that it was the application to psychotherapy which was novel. He also admitted that the concepts have previously or concurrently been formulated by many philosophers, psychologists, other social thinkers, and therapists such as Adkins, Adler, Dubois, and Dolland and Miller.

Ellis' central theme of RT was that:

> Man is a uniquely rational, as well as uniquely irrational, animal; that his emotional or psychological disturbances are largely a result of his thinking illogically or irrationally; and that he can rid himself of most of his emotional or mental unhappiness, ineffectuality, and disturbance if he learns to maximize his rational and minimize his irrational thinking. (1973, p. 36)

The psychotherapist would work with individuals who are "needlessly unhappy and troubled or who are weighted down with intense anxiety or hostility" (Ellis, 1973). The therapist attempts to show the patient that he/she is having problems because of distorted perception or illogical thinking and that what needs doing is a reordering of the perceptions and a reorganizing of philosophies, thereby changing the illogical thought, emotion and behavior.

Ellis' theoretical assumption was that "human thinking and emotion are not two disparate or different processes, but that they significantly overlap and are in some respects, for all practical purposes, essentially the same thing" (1973, p. 36). He felt that usually none of the four fundamental life operations (sensing, moving, emoting, and thinking) are experienced separately. Usually, if a person senses, he will tend to perform some act at the same time and have some thought and feeling about it.

Ellis stated that emotion can originate through the sensori-motor process, biophysical stimulation, or the

cognitive/thinking process. He added a fourth possibility--"experiencing and recirculating of previous emotional processes." Emotional feelings can be controlled through any of the above. Ellis chose to emphasize the cerebral process (the latter two processes).

Ellis believed that emotion is basically a biased, prejudiced, or strongly evalutive kind of thought. He cited theoretical and empirical evidence in favor of this definition (McGill, Bousfield, & Orblson, 1952; Arnheim, 1958). He said that what we label as thinking is a relative-calm and dispassionate appraisal (or organized perception) of a given situation, an objective association of many of the elements in this situation, and a coming to some conclusion as a result of this association or discriminating process.

Ellis said an emotional, as opposed to non-emotional, person may be classified as having a biased thought which originated from a prior experience. This person becomes unclear and ineffective and may not use all the information available to him. On the other hand, a non-emotional person will think more clearly and use the maximum information available to him.

Ellis concluded, therefore, that an emotion is, most commonly, a kind of appraisal or thinking that is influenced

by previous experiences; is highly individualized; is frequently accompanied by gross bodily reactions; and usually leads the individual to some kind of action--positive or negative. Conversely, thinking would be a more calm, less individualized, less physically involved and "less activity directed mode of discriminating." Thinking can, then, in some instances, take place without a significant amount of emotion but more commonly, the two flow into one another. Emoting becomes a person's thoughts, and thoughts lead one to feel emotion. Hence, it would seem that human emotions are largely a form of thinking, or result from thinking, and that an individual can appreciably control one's emotions by controlling his thoughts. That is, one can control one's emotions merely by talking to one's self, thereby changing the talk into statements that would make one feel better.

Ellis believed human beings are exceptionally complex and there is no "simple" way they become emotionally disturbed. He says:

> Their psychological problems arise from their misperceptions and mistaken cognitions about what they perceive; from their emotional underreactions or overreactions to normal and to unusual stimuli; and from their habitually dysfunctional behavior patterns, which encourage them to keep repeating maladjustive responses even when they know they are behaving poorly.

> Consequently, a three-way rational-emotive-behavioristic approach to their problem is desirable; and rational-emotive therapy provides this multi-faceted attack. (1973, p. 55)

Primarily, Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) is a highly directive method of teaching people how to increase their skill in reasoning so they will be better able to deal with the problems and stresses of daily living. It is based on that fact that the ability to think logically enables people to keep their emotions under better control, to see problems more clearly, and solve them more effectively. In effect, RET is the application of the scientific attitude and method to the totality of daily living.

The ABC's of Human Behavior

In order to more clearly delineate the way in which people behave and to help persons in RET to apply more scientific thinking to their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, Ellis developed the ABCD scheme. In this scheme, A stands for an event as perceived by the person in question; B stands for the evaluating thoughts of the perception which the person has; C stands for the emotion or feeling which results from the evaluating thoughts; and, D stands for the reaction or behavior which the person makes.

Let us take an example. We are all familiar with that phenomenon in which two persons who, upon first meeting, share only a mutual antagonism later wind up as close

friends. What happens? The two are still the same persons. Thus, Point A--what each perceives with his senses--remains unchanged. Yet, Point D--the behavior toward each other--is unmistakably altered. Ellis would say that the intervening B and C Points--the thoughts and emotions--are all the difference. Initially, each was likely thinking of the other, "Look at that ass. He thinks he's hot stuff. My God, I can't stand him. And, besides, it looks as if he doesn't care much for me either." From these thoughts flow the feelings of disgust, annoyance, anger, defensiveness, insecurity. Eventually, after some intervening experience, different thoughts may occur. "He's actually got a pretty good wit. We went to the same school, I wonder if he knew so and so. He couldn't be too bad a fellow to offer me a smoke." The results are feelings of warmth, interest and a gain in confidence.

We can diagram the process thus:

A	B	C	D
Event or thing perceived through the senses	Thoughts used to evaluate the perception	Feeling invoked by the thoughts	Behavioral Reaction
Another person	"Look at the snob," "How disgusting"	Hostility Anger Defensiveness	Sneer Sarcastic Remark
Same person	"I enjoy this cigarette," "That was a good crack," "Who did he know?"	Warmth Interest Confidence	Greeting Introduces Self

The essential point here is that the B point--the thoughts one has--leads to the emotional reaction which motivates behavior. The crux of Ellis' theory, then, and the source of its power as a therapeutic method, is that people have control over their thoughts. They can think about their thinking and evaluate it. They can choose to think otherwise; and, if they can evaluate and choose what they think, they can control their emotional and behavioral responses. A troubled individual need not be satisfied with coming to an understanding of his emotional conflicts only to wonder what he might do about them, nor does he have to view himself as controlled by external contingencies. The individual is able to control his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and is, therefore, totally responsible for them. Since this is the case, the process of therapy consists of becoming aware of one's thoughts, subjecting those thoughts to rational critique, and changing thoughts found to be invalid into more valid ones.

Maxie Maultsby

Having laid out the development of RET as Ellis reported it, we turn to the work of Maxie Maultsby, who has done much work in popularizing Ellis' thought and developing practical and effective techniques with which to apply Ellis' theories to the everyday lives of troubled

persons whose problems often appear to defy the neat and concise world of theory.

Motivation in RET Theory

Because RET holds that thought controls emotion and behavior, and because persons can control their thought by subjecting their thoughts to rational analysis, motivation is seen as coming from within and being under control of the person. Environmental factors are not seen as important to motivational theory in RET, as they are in behaviorist theory, since it is the evaluating thoughts of the person who perceives the stimulus which determines how he will react. Thus, Maultsby uses the term "self motivation" rather than simply motivation to explain the RET view. Self motivation is bound up with desire.

> Everything you do is motivated either by your desire to get something you want, or by your desire to avoid something you do not want. The something you desire may be social acceptance, approval, love, power, money, fame; or, you may desire to avoid poverty, pain, humiliation, neglect, hatred. (Maultsby, 1975, p. 95, author's emphasis)

While this view of motivation recognizes contingencies as affecting behavior, just as behaviorist theory does, it provides a way of looking at the source of what constitutes rewards or punishments for any particular individual. Rewards and punishments are not the source of motivation and RET does not make use of manipulating the environment to change behavior. Rather, RET attempts to reveal and analyze the evaluating thoughts of an individual which

make certain stimuli either rewarding or punishing, and then to analyze those thoughts rationally.

Likewise, there are similarities and differences between classical psychoanalytic theory and RET. RET recognized emotion as a motivating factor in behavior (but thought precedes both emotion and behavior). As in Freudian theory, emotional conflict is recognized as a source of human difficulties. As Maultsby (1975) states:

> Of course, no one merely has one desire. We all have a great hodgepodge of them: hopefully many useful ones, some that are in conflict with others, and usually a few that are frankly harmful to us . . . . There are some quite normal but unhappy people who have never learned the skill of putting their desires in cooperative order. Without realizing it, they have rational desires paired with irrational ones. Consequently, they act like bank robbers who want to be applauded in the papers, or losers who still believe they deserve a prize for winning. (p. 96)

However, unlike classical Freudian practice, RET does not find it necessary to delve into or concentrate on a person's past history. Whatever significant effects the past may have had are contained in the rational and irrational beliefs and attitudes which the person now has. It matters not how these thoughts have been formed, whether by the experience of conflict during development or by conditioning. Only the recognition and analysis of current attitudes are important. These current attitudes are subjected to analysis, and the therapist is likely to use more persuasive and directive techniques than would a Freudian.

It should be emphasized that insight into current conflicts is not enough. The crux of RET is not merely to understand thoughts and how they conflict, but to actively question and analyze these thoughts to test them for their validity. If they are found to be invalid, a more rational view of events in one's life is sought. This more rational view will alter the emotional reaction to a particular situation, and the altered emotions will move one to act differently.

Before ending this section, we should mention three other motivational factors Maultsby mentioned as influencing desires. (Maultsby, 1971, p. 31). The first is physiological needs--hunger, sex, and various forms of physical discomfort. The second is the goals which one has developed, whether rationally or irrationally. The third is expectancy of success, lack of which can inhibit a person from taking actions to achieve their goals. This expectancy for success is basically the framework which is being used by those who are investigating the locus of control and attribution theories mentioned in the preceding section. Maultsby said little else about these three factors directly, but used them, as we shall see, as the basis for the criteria he employed to assess the rationality of attitudes and beliefs.

Maultsby's Rational Behavior Therapy (RBT)*

Up to this point, we have traced the development of Albert Ellis' thought as it evolved what is known as Rational Emotive Therapy. We have also looked at Maultsby's views on motivation. We have seen that a person's behavior, in a given situation, is ultimately dependent upon his thoughts about it; and we have made allusions to critically assessing one's thought to judge its rationality. This is all well and good. But on what basis do we decide whether our thoughts are rational or irrational? Maxie Maultsby (1975) has developed a relatively simple, understandable, and effective method for subjecting our thoughts to analysis. It is very similar to Ellis' method, but is slightly more systematic. Maultsby calls his method Rational Behavior Therapy (RBT). There are five rules by which a behavior, and the thoughts which lead to it, are judged to be rational:

1. It is based on objective reality, or the known relevant facts of a life situation.
2. It enables people to protect their lives from physical harm or death.
3. It enables people to achieve their goals most quickly.

---

* RBT is Maultsby's application of RET. They are essentially synonymous.

4. It enables people to keep out of any conflict with others which they would rather not have.
5. It enables people to prevent or quickly eliminate emotional conflict with themselves which they feel is not worth having. (Maultsby, 1975, p. 8)

Maultsby feels that any thought or behavior which is in keeping with at least three of these five rules can be labeled rational. Any behavior violating three or more rules is irrational. In Rule 1, Maultsby defines objective reality as the sensible world outside of us. It is "what could be recorded with a camera, tape recorder, or some other recording device" (Maultsby, 1975, p. 10).

In Maultsby's system, these five rules for rational thinking are applied to Rational Self Analysis (RSA). These RSA's are written out by the person attempting to rationally analyze his/her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They follow Ellis' ABCD scheme, but include only three parts:

A. The event or situation in which the behavior to be analyzed occurred.
B. One's thoughts about that event (self-talk).
C. One's emotional reactions.

The person writes out, as completely as possible, what he experienced under the three headings. He then writes out a "debate," or evaluation, of everything he wrote in A, B, and C.

All of this sounds deceptively simple. What is the point? Most people are not aware of this three step process going on in themselves. They have what Maultsby calls "abbreviated emotions." Through conditioning, or habituation, people are used to responding to certain outside events in certain set ways. Thus, they go from A (the event) to C (the emotional reaction--and then to behavior) without any awareness of their self-talk. For example, a fifteen year old is called a punk by another youth. The first youth hits the second. If you asked him why, he would undoubtedly respond, "Because he called me a punk!" Maultsby would not agree. This is what really happened:

A. A boy said, "You punk."

B. The addressee thought: He can't say that. I'm not a punk. Who does he think he is? He thinks he's hot stuff, and he's making me look pretty foolish in front of my friends. I can't let him get away with it! I'll lose face.

C. Upset, defensive, angry, hurt and hostile feelings.

It was the thoughts of the offended youth, not the words of his foe, which set in motion the chain of events in himself that led to his striking the boy. Furthermore, analaysis would show that his behavior was irrational according to the five rules. His actions: (1) did not protect his physical well being. He could have been beaten

or killed; (2) did not achieve any of his goals; (3) did not keep him out of trouble with others; and (4) most likely will cause him emotional conflict.

There are many examples of our automatic reactions to certain events. Maultsby's A-B-C is a way of uncovering our unconscious self-talk about these events. Yet, being aware of the self-talk which leads to irrational behavior is not the solution to our problem. Maultsby insists that we debate each statement made in the A and B sections. Only then will we be in a position to change our self-talk and its effects on our perceptions. Were the pugnacious boy to perform a complete RSA on his behavior, it might look like this:

A	dA
This big, dumb greaser was at the dance last week. I was with my friends. He was trying to get through the crowd and he ran into me and then said, "You punk."	It is true that I was with my friends. It is true he was trying to get through the crowd. However, it is not true for me to say he is dumb. I don't know that. It is irrational for me to call him a greaser, as that is mere name calling. It is true he was bigger than I was. It is true we made physical contact. He called me "punk."
B	**dB**
1. He can't say that.	1. Actually, he can say whatever he pleases. There is nothing I can do about it. It is irrational for me to think otherwise.

3. Feel that no one has the power to make me behave in a way other than I want to and is rational.

4. Be more ready to judge other's behavior toward me as rational or irrational, and to respond to irrational behavior in a rational manner.

The preceding is an example of a typical Rational Self Analysis. A few things should be noted about it.

Maultsby agrees with Ellis that language separates man from lower animals, and that it is the power of language which can cause him unique difficulties. Because man is capable of carrying the words of others around with him, the impressions and appraisals which others make of him and his environment can remain with him indefinitely. Herein lies man's great capacity for both rational and irrational thought. Maultsby appears to think that one's self concept and "superego" are largely comprised of words--usually those of others. When persons are troubled, it is the thoughts and words which they have carried around with them, and which they have used to evaluate situations and set off their emotions, that Maultsby and Ellis wanted to deal with. So the RSA sample above may have seemed a little silly upon first reading, but there is no word or thought which is too trivial for analysis. Because the

words a person uses to evaluate troubling events, as in the example above, are so powerful, there is no room in RET and RBT for metaphor. Each word is taken literally, and analyzed according to Rule 1. That is, if the words used to describe the event (A) or evaluate it (B) cannot be confirmed by recording devices, they are irrational. (There are, of course, some assumptions which are made by RET which cannot be confirmed by a camera. The principal assumptions are that all persons are equal, all make mistakes, and that no person is the same as his behaviors. These are the therapist's "trump," which he uses to refute any contrary assumptions of the client, i.e., irrational self-talk. A client who challenges these assumptions is asked to disprove them.)

Let us get back to our fifteen year old. Will setting down his emotional goals be enough to achieve them? Perhaps not. For cognitive insight, as we have said, does not necessarily lead to behavior change. Maultsby held that a further step beyond cognitive insight is what he called emotional insight, and it is emotional insight which is necessary for behavior change. Emotional insight is said to be gained when a person goes from <u>thinking</u> a new behavior is right to <u>feeling</u> that it is right. Our fifteen year old may decide that a more rational response to his being called a punk would be to turn to a

friend and say, "I wonder what's bugging him?" The next time he would find himself in a similar situation, he might try it. Chances are, though, that he would still be churning inside. The response certainly seems more rational, but it still would not feel right. He would be experiencing Maultsby's brand of cognitive dissonance. Since thought precedes emotion, a change in thought necessarily precedes a change in feeling. During the time it takes for one to begin to feel appropriate in performing a new behavior, one will experience this dissonance between thought and feeling--between rational thinking and gut thinking. Maultsby calls this dissonance the phony fear--one fears he/she is being a phony. "I am who I am," our youth will protest. "I can't be any other way."

Maultsby could not disagree more. The only phony Maultsby recognizes is the mannequin in the department store (and that is what he told his clients). People behave as they behave, and they change their behavior constantly. They are not phonies. They are fallible human beings. So how can a person who is changing his/her behavior on the basis of rational insights be a phony?

Maultsby claimed to have lost many clients at this stage. It was to help speed the process of new behaviors beginning to feel right that he developed Rational Emotive Imagery. REI is basically "practicing

the habit you want to learn " (Maultsby, 1975, p. 88). Several times each day, a person who has done an RSA and who has decided on a more rational behavior, mentally pictures himself performing the new behavior. The person reads the A, dA, dB, and E sections of the RSA, pictures the event as exactly as possible, and pictures himself performing the new behavior over and over again. Maultsby compared this to training pilots or astronauts simulating flight. It is no more mere "pretending" nor any less effective than ground flight training. With this method Maultsby found a simple and concrete technique to provide a stepping stone between insight into a problem and a behavioral alternative.

The major technique of RBT, one underlying all that has been said thus far, might be described as rational confrontation. RET and RBT do not stress close or supporting relationships between the parties in analysis. The therapist begins to confront the client from the start, usually by asking the client to describe the problem and then critiquing the words and expressions used in the description. The constant aim of the critique is to begin to educate the client in RBT concepts, drawing careful distinctions between thinking and feeling, debunking metaphoric expressions, and explaining the goals and methods of RBT. Eventually, the therapist hopes to teach the client to rationally confront his thoughts and

feelings himself, through the use of the RSA and RSI techniques mentioned above.

Summary

Albert Ellis' theory of Rational Emotive Therapy and Maxie Maultsby's concrete and practical application of Ellis' theory called Rational Behavior Therapy have been explored in this section. These approaches assume that thought precedes both emotion and behavior, that thought can, at least for purposes of therapy, be equated with the language used to evaluate situations, and that the individual can evaluate and control his thought and the emotions and behaviors which follow. Possible applications of these theories are touched upon in the concluding section which follows.

CHAPTER III

Conclusion

In this paper, we have noted that LD students often manifest behavior problems, and that the field has recognized this and sought solutions to this problem in the behaviorist school of psychology. We have seen that a very significant practical difficulty in using behavior modification to teach new behaviors is that new behaviors often do not carry over into environments different from those in which the behavior is learned. We have hypothesized that this practical difficulty stems from the incompleteness of behaviorist theory, in that it does not take into account the data of the learner's subjective experience. While efforts to take this data into account are fraught with difficulties, it was concluded that such an effort is needed, in that the learner's perceptions of his own control over the environment correlated more highly with academic success than either IQ or socioeconomic status. This was found to be the case in several studies. We then presented the theories and techniques of Ellis and Maultsby, which were aimed at taking into account and changing the individual's

perceptions and attitudes in order to effect constructive changes in behavior. What can we make of Ellis and Maultsby? Could their theories be of benefit to the field of learning disabilities?

Certainly, there are things to be said in their favor. The method of RBT can be described as directive, and this type of approach seems to lend itself to a school setting more than a less directive approach of a thinker like Rogers. Because it is more directive, it could be used in a group, and because its criteria for rational behavior are explicit, broad examples can be used to explain the concepts and then the concepts can later be applied to individual student's cases.

A second important argument in RBT's favor is that it stresses personal responsibility and leaves control in the hands (or thoughts) of the learner. As we have seen, the sense of control correlates highly with school success, and studies have shown that LD youngsters very often lack this sense (Bryan, 1978). We have also hypothesized that improving an individual's sense of control by altering his thinking would allow him to generalize more constructive behaviors into different environments.

Thirdly, Maultsby has realized that not everyone has highly developed verbal skills and has published six booklets in cartoon form which are written with a relatively low readability and somewhat simplified concepts. These

appear to be on the very right track in adapting RBT for learning disabled students (Maultsby, 1974).

We must recognize that this approach is not for everyone. A student with auditory channel learning disabilities may not have the skills necessary to comprehend the approach. Likewise, it would take very creative adaptations to use this approach effectively with students whose reading and writing skills preclude them from comprehending even Maultsby's low readability booklets or from doing even simple rational self analyses. Lastly, this approach clearly takes some commitment on the part of the individual. That Maultsby found it necessary to develop the rational emotive imagery technique is testimony to the difficulty of changing disruptive yet ingrained patterns of behavior. The writer believes that there are some students who have suffered enough from the consequences of their negative behavior that some inroads might be made with these methods, but there are also many who are probably not ready to commit themselves to change. In any case, it seems certain that a strong trust would need to be built between students and teacher before such an approach could be successful. It also seems that this approach would be most successful with high school students whose cognitional abilities are developed sufficiently to comprehend the necessary concepts.

To conclude, this approach would clearly need adaptations for use in the schools. Patterns of irrational behaviors and beliefs would have to be developed for presentation to students in teaching them RBT (see Ellis' list in the addendum for an example). Students would need to be screened to ensure that they possessed the academic and verbal subskills to work with RBT successfully. And a good deal of trust would need to be developed between student and teacher. Yet this approach appears to be on the right track in allowing a method which could help students come to grips with and gain perspective on the causes of their problem behaviors and to gain new control over their interactions with many environments.

ADDENDUM

IDEAS AND CONCEPTS OF RET

Ten Common Irrational Beliefs (From Ellis):

1. All persons have an absolute need for love and approval from most of their peers and other significant persons, such as parents and teachers.

2. One is only worthwhile if he is completely competent and nearly perfect in all he attempts--or at least in one major area.

   This includes choices of people to interrelate with.

3. Certain people are evil, wicked, or villains, and should be severely reprimanded, blamed, and punished for their evil ways.

   This includes blaming others for present situations.

4. It is terrible, horrible, catastrophic when life's situations aren't just the way one wants them to be.

5. External events are the cause of most human behavior and people have little or no ability to control their happiness or their own sorrows or disturbances.

6. A person should be overly preoccupied with fear and anxiety about events that are uncertain or potentially dangerous.

7. Life's difficulties and responsibilities are easier to avoid than they are to face.

8. A person's past is all important to one's present behavior, and since certain events strongly influence one's life, these events will indefinitely do so.

9. People and things in this society should be different from the way they are, and it is horrible or catastrophic that correct solutions to problems that plague society are not immediate.

10. Maximum human happiness can best be achieved by inaction, inertia, passivity and uncommittedly enjoying oneself.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Adelman, Howard. The concept of intrinsic motivation: Implications for practice and research with the learning disabled. Learning Disabilities Quarterly, 1978, 1, 43-54.

Atkinson, J. W. An introduction to motivation. Princeton, N.J.: D. Von Nostrand Co., Inc., 1964.

Bruner, J. S. Toward a theory of instruction. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966.

Bryan, Tanis. Learning disabilities and attributions: Update on self-concept. Paper presented at the Wisconsin Association for Children with Learning Disabilities. Madison, Wisconsin, October, 1978.

Calder, B. J. and Staw, B. M. Self-perception of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 31, 599-605.

Coleman, J. S.; Campbell, E. Q.; Hoben, C. J.; McPartland, J.; Mood, A. M.; Weinfield, E.; and York, R. L. Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, D. C. : United States Printing Office, 1966.

Corsini, Raymond, ed. Current psychotherapies. Itasca, Ill.: F. E. Peacock Publishers, Inc., 1973.

de Charms, R. Personal causation: The internal affective determinants of behavior. New York: Academic Press, 1968.

Deci, E. L. Intrinsic motivation. New York: Plenum Press, 1975.

Dweck, C. S. The role of expectations and attributions in the alleviation of learned helplessness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 31, 678-685.

Dweck, C. S. & Bush, E. S. Sex differences in learned helplessness: I. Differential debilitation with peer and adult evaluators. Developmental Psychology, 1976, 12, 147-156.

Dweck, C. S. & Gilliard, D. Expectancy statements as determinants of reactions to failure: Sex differences in persistence and expectancy change. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1975, 32, 1977-1084.

Dweck, C. S. & Reppucci, N. D. Learned Helplessness and reinforcement responsibility in children. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1973, 25, 109-116.

Ellis, A. Growth through reason. Palo Alto, California: Science and Behavior Books, 1971.

Ellis, A. Reason and emotion in psychotherapy. New York: Lyle Stuart, 1973a.

Ellis, A. Humanistic psychotherapy. New York: The Julian Press, Inc., 1973b.

Harrison, F. I. Relationship between home background, school success, and adolescent attitudes. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development, 1968, 14, 331-344.

Kazdin, A. E. and Bootzen, R. R. The token economy: An evaluative review. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 1972, 5, 343-372.

Lepper, M. R.; Greene, D.; and Nisbett, R. E. Undermining children's intrinsic interest with extrinsic rewards: A test of the "overjustification" hypothesis. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1973, 28, 129-137.

Lerner, J. Children with learning disabilities. Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971.

Lessing, E. E. Racial differences in indices of ego functioning relevant to academic achievement. Journal of Genetic Psychology, 1969, 115, 153-167.

Maultsby, Maxie. Handbook of rational self counseling. Lexington, Ky.: University of Kentucky Medical Center, 1971.

Maultsby, Maxie. Rational emotive imagery. Rational living. 1971, 6, 24-27.

Maultsby, Maxie. Systematic written homework in psychotherapy. Rational Living, 1971, 6, 16-23.

Maultsby, Maxie, and Hendricks, Allie. You and your emotions. Lexington, Ky: Maxie C. Maultsby, 1974a.

Maultsby, Maxie, and Hendricks, Allie. This is rational thinking. Lexington, Ky.: Maxie C. Maultsby, 1974b.

Maultsby, Maxie, and Hendricks, Allie. ABC's of how to feel better. Lexington, Ky.: Maxie C. Maultsby, 1974c.

Maultsby, Maxie and Hendricks, Allie. Imagine it and then do it (REI). Lexington, Ky.: Maxie C. Maultsby, 1974d.

Maultsby, Maxie and Hendricks, Allie. The enemies inside your head. Lexington, Ky.: Maxie C. Maultsby, 1974e.

Maultsby, Maxie, and Hendricks, Allie. Don't believe everything they told you. Lexington, Ky.: Maxie C. Maultsby, 1974f.

Maultsby, Maxie. Help yourself to happiness. New York: Institute for Rational Living, 1975.

Meichenbaum, D. H. Cognitive-behavior modification. Newsletter, 1976, No. 2.

Phares, E. J. Locus of control in personality. Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1976.

Rotter, J. B. Social learning and clinical psychology. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1954.

Rotter, J. B. Some problems and misconceptions related to the construct of internal versus external control and reinforcement. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1975, 43, 56-67.

Staw, B. M. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. New York: General Learning Press Module, 1975.

Weiner, B. Attribution theory, achievement motivation, and the educational process. Review of Educational Research, 1972, 42, 203-215.

Wlodkowski, R. Motivation. Washington, D. C. : National Education Association of the United States, 1977.